

QUARTERLY REPORT
(October 2001-December 2001)
PEACEFUL COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE
USAID's Conflict Mitigation Initiative in the Ferghana Valley
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USAID's Peaceful Communities Initiative in the Ferghana Valley

Start-up

Mercy Corps in collaboration with Ferghana Valley (FV) based NGOs have initiated USAID's conflict mitigation project Peaceful Communities Initiative (PCI). The cooperative agreement was signed on 1st October 2001; however, start up of the project was hampered by the events following of September 11th, including the evacuation of the Project Director from the FV in early October. In addition, the start up of the project has been complicated by working in the three countries of the Ferghana Valley, establishing uniform administrative and financial procedures for the PCI Team and the difficulty of traveling in the FV by the PCI staff.

The main focus of the first three months of the project has been to hire the technical staff in all three countries. All technical staff has been hired and Mercy Corps has established partnerships with 5 NGOs, in Uzbekistan (Kojand Business Association, FIDO, and in Sohk), in Tajikistan (ICA: EHIO), and in Kyrgyzstan (Foundation for Tolerance International). PCI now has offices located throughout the FV in Kyrgyzstan (Batken, Osh, Isfana), Uzbekistan (Andijan, Kokand, Sohk), and Tajikistan (Khojand). The core of the PCI Team is comprised of 19 technical specialists (specialists in business development, organization development, micro-credit, water, agricultural, conflict mitigation, gender, community mobilizations, and media), this broad range of expertise will enable the multi-ethnic teams to address problems in the selected pilot communities.

The main office will be located in Andijan and several potential sites have been identified. A priority was placed on getting the full PCI hired and working, before the office main office was opened in Andijan. The first three months of the project the Project Director worked out of Mercy Corps office in Osh.

Meetings with Local Governments

PCI has contacted local government officials to inform them of the project's objectives and to gain their support for PCI's program. PCI has met with the Osh Oblast Governor, Chief Secretary of Andijan Oblast, Batken Oblast Governor, Mayor of Sohk District (the Uzbekistan enclave where the population is 97% Tajik), and other key officials. These approvals will enable PCI to work in the local communities. The PCI project has been met with enthusiasm by local governments in all three countries in the FV.

December Kick-off Meeting and Participatory Rural Appraisal Short Course

The PCI Team Kick-off Meeting was held in Osh in December 2001. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together the members of PCI Team to form a consensus on the objectives of the PCI project. Another key objective was to make it clear that PCI is not a program comprised of players from separate organizations (Mercy Corps and partner NGOs) in three countries focused

on ethnic tension in their respective countries, but a team that represents the interests of all citizens in the Ferghana Valley. Another key objective was to discuss what PCI hopes to achieve over the next three years and how the team plans to achieve this. Also, at the meeting Site Selection Criteria, Needs Assessment Guide, and Grant Criteria were finalized. Two Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Short Courses are planned in Khojand (January 7th) and Andijan (January 8th) and final preparations for the site selection process will be made. Identification of potential sites began in November and the pilot site selection process (needs assessment of multi-ethnic communities where there are ethnic tensions) will begin on 8th January 2002. Final selection of the first six pairings of communities will be made on 15th February 2002.

Groundwork for Coordination

Throughout the first 3 months of the project, PCI Staff has met extensively with potential future partners; these meetings included USAID contractors and grantees, USAID, World Bank Missions, ADB, International Water Management Institute, Swiss Agency for Development for Cooperation, International Secretariat for Water, and others. Once the initial sites are selected the relevant organizations will be contacted to explore potential coordination. The PCI Staff has discussed with representatives from USAID/Bishkek the possibility of placing a FSN based in Osh. This would be a great asset in helping USAID contractors/grantees and other donors to coordinate activities in the FV. PCI Osh office also provided information to USAID FSNs on the logistics of setting up an office in Osh.

Secondary Projects

Secondary projects were also initiated to quickly make PCI presence in the FV visible.

The USAID Friendship Youth Basketball League

The USAID Friendship Youth Basketball League was established. A preliminary five matches were played in October to January. The first tournament will be in Andijan. The participating teams will be Ferghana, Andijan, Osh, and Mailu Su.

The Condominium Sports' Facilities and Youth League Program

The Condominium Program is a collaboration between PCI, Urban Institute/USAID, and the two local NGOs. The program was initiated to promote youth activities in the multi-ethnic newly established condominiums (former block apartments that have been established condominiums to manage their common resources). The program will begin in February with a competition announcement in the local press and flyers posted throughout Osh and selection of at least four sites will be made early March. Basketball/volleyball courts will be constructed in March-April. The key for the program's success will be a feeling of ownership/buy-in by the condominiums to promote sustainability of the facilities and the large participation of youth in the leagues.